

FELLOWSHIP  
I N W O R K

# FELLOWSHIP IN WORK

BY

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# THE INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF WORKERS

Oakley House, Bloomsbury St., London, W.C.

"Ab, little recks the labourer,  
How near his work is holding him to God,  
The loving Labourer through space and time  
  
After all, not to create only, or to found only,  
But to bring, perhaps from afar, what is already founded,  
To give it our own identity, average, limitless, free,  
To fill the gross, the torpid bulk, with vital religious fire,  
Not to repel or destroy so much as to accept, fuse, rehabilitate ."

WALT WHITMAN

THIS Fellowship declares that all true work is an expression of Love, and therefore seeks —

- 1st. To bring about a recognition of this fact, and to develop by every means all work that promotes a perfect, harmonious human life.
- 2nd To encourage and support each country's national and traditional handicrafts by stimulating and reviving the inherent skill of the workers themselves
- 3rd. To afford opportunities, by exhibitions, conferences, literature, and other suitable means, for bringing together from all countries of the world examples of work which are impressed with the identity of the worker and are a true expression of beauty.

Further particulars in relation to the Fellowship may be obtained from the Secretary at the above address.

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# Fellowship in Work

## I

### The Perversion of Work

IN olden, olden times the peasant was a free man. He lived unmolested in God's own garden; lovingly he tended it, deriving from its beautiful fruits all he needed.

The golden crops of grain and seeds, the cream-white potatoes, rich dark-green multitudes of cucumbers, the red apples of his garden, and most of all the wild abundant berries of all kinds and colours, sweet and sour, all life-giving and all good to gather, and the numerous gifts of the woods and hills, of river and lakes, fed him and his little ones, and he "ate his bread in thankfulness."

The silky green flax of the delicate little

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blue flowers, growing along the slopes of his fields to the cool water-fed dales, became, in the weaving hands of the woman under the rays of the Eternal Sun, a fair fabric as white and as pure as snow.

The little flowers of the fields and meadows, the fantastic pattern of Father-Frost on the small windows in the winter, all the harmonies of foliage—hues and moods of Isis enveloped in woman's love of mystic lore, lived again in loom and decoration. In free communion with Nature, the woman, in her simple peasant life, working and eating, loving and sleeping in the open air under the ever mysterious starry heaven, told it all out in harmonious adornment of garments, wrought it in colours and symbols—more felt than understood. She would wander out into the woods and hunt for the sweet-smelling heather and the bitter, refreshing, pungent birch leaf, and dig for the red-hearted madder-root and pluck the daisy, yellow-gold. The *red* was like her idea of *glory*. Where could she direct it but to the Almighty God presiding above? The *yellow* daisy was the pure gold of her simple aspirations, the *flame* of her

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heart, like the flame of the taper in church lifting its fiery tongue to the unspeakable. And the *blue* of the cornflower, was it not like her humble *devotion*? So what wonder that these gifts of God's gardens were crystallised into vegetable dyes ever since the memory of man.

All round about the peasant home, man was surrounded by symbols of Isis. He read into the lofty trees and hunted afar the mysterious flower which opens only for one night; he saw things in the woods which no one else saw; he heard from his cradle of unseen forces of Nature, of mysterious beings—helpers and foes, some whom he feared, some whom he learned to obey. It was a constant union and intermixing of real life with the ancient legends.

The birds—those feathery flocks of so many hues and voices—how did they affect the peasant imagination? Surely they were the most mysterious beings on earth. Ever since the Aryan race began, the birds were the embodiment of thoughts and messages, they were the souls of the departed. Thousands of bird legends, each more beautiful than the

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last, live even now in the memory of the peasants.

How natural, then, for them to carve the beloved symbol in wood and metal, work it in iron and silver, silk and thread. Even now in our twentieth century, one can find in every village and home far enough from a railway's levelling influence, those birds carved at every end of the huge rafters, or looking down from the end of the roof, or two peacocks adorning an upper window, usually turned face to face towards the "Tree of Life." You will find it in a curious utensil in use even to this day on a peasant table — the saltcellar. It runs in joyous bands and Indian files over the borders of table-cloths and bed-clothes, hangs down from towels and adorns every Church cloth. It looks mysteriously from the folds of the ancient brocade gown, and shines in golden threads over the woman's face.

Even to-day, if one takes the trouble to go out of the beaten track to some Northern peasant home, perhaps getting a bed in a little attic, called in Russia a "light room," and finding a collection of ancient garments on the wall, under a blue linen cover, one is struck

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with all this living history of human life, thought, and symbolism—all the hidden, unspoken beauty of a poet's heart! It is a revelation. Every stitch seems to be put in with a blessing, with a smile, just as a mother puts the last touch to her darling's attire, lovingly, blessingly. Ay, these people felt beauty. They loved to wear beautifully made garments; they seemed never to have grudged the time nor efforts to make every piece of clothing a true poem. It was in harmony with the home, the field, the work. The elaborate making suited the long winter evenings. It was an uplifting of the soul to follow the ancient religious symbols, like an all-day prayer, needed in the long dark days, when the joyous Sun shows so little, and the Soul is shadowed by the shrunken life of winter. It was also a reminiscence of the splendid sunny work among the green fields, the fragrant trees and flowers, among all those bright colours with which a maiden likes to surround herself. No wonder this winter work was always made in social gatherings and accompanied with songs! All life then was a fairy-tale, all fairy-tales were life. They were one.

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Where are they all gone? And how could the cruel modern misery come to such as these true children were? Who can tell the story?

The enemy, the destroyer of all this fair life, approached stealthily like a thief in the night.

How obnoxious a task to write a history of destruction! Yet it is necessary, as there are many yet who do not see the fiend under his mask of "civilisation," "improvement," "growth of industry," "accumulation of a nation's wealth." A modern destroyer must be attractive, or else he could not succeed. He came very softly, he imitated one who wished well, wished enlightenment and happiness.

At first he brought machines. Thousands found work in the new factories. Fathers, brothers, and husbands went there first.

It seemed hard to part for years, hard for the woman to do all the man's work besides her own; it seemed hard never to hear from them—to live, ever expecting a message of death or accident, to dream of broken ties, of temptations; but more and more efforts were made. Then they returned, these first pioneers. Ah! in what a strange way! How changed!

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Nothing in the village was good enough for them: their very wives and sweethearts no more lovable and desirable, only stupid village folk. The simple fare, the bast shoes, the sober daily work—all this was stupid. Earnings? Yes, some brought nearly enough to pay the taxes, hardly enough to pay for the damage caused by the lack of the man's share in work. And then they all wanted to show off: they must buy modern garments in town, and walk through the street with the new-fangled harmonica, and shout in half-drunken voices the new "fashionable" songs. Ah well, it was almost a blessing when the short holidays ended and the men returned to their factories again. But the seed was planted. Soon after, women too found their way to the factories. Who knows where the call came from? Whether the town finery in which the country maiden thought she looked "almost like a lady," or the great hunger for freedom, her own sweet will, the mysterious attraction of a new, unknown life, the breaking down of old traditions, new ways, a new moral code altogether? So the women followed the men. Most of them found more than they bargained

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for. They lived a hideous life ; these healthy country flowers soon fell an easy prey to the towns. Who was there to protect and love them for their own sake ? — to respect their womanhood and motherhood ? Huddled together, men, women, and maidens, in a heap of unguided humanity, none to pity them, plenty to blame and condemn ! How could it be otherwise ? Intolerably long hours, cheap pay, unexpected fines, a mysterious grinding and pressing of all there was in them of life, womanhood. truth. All ground together, exhausted, and thrown out—a factory “waste” ! What was the effect of this second exodus on the village life ? More exhaustion, more hopelessness, more despair, less and less strength in work. And then, in after years, the debauched, diseased, exhausted wanderers came home one by one, to sponge on the remainder of the family, to curse and drink and die an ignoble death, leaving consternation and dumb suffering behind.

What, then, must be done to re-establish justice, manhood, happiness, the poetry of life ? Can we see the broken law ? What is there to do to give the peasant a place to

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live in, on the shores of the Volga or sacred Ganges, in the Highlands of Scotland or the Emerald Isle? What is there but the *free possession of land by the tiller of it?*

I hear many, many voices violently raised against me, calling me a Utopian, a madcap. How can this be where a State must be the legal owner and regulator of laws? How very unpractical to wish an artist, a preacher, a musician, a writer, to give their best for the sake of service! How can they live? They will perish of starvation! Absurd and ridiculous!

Ay, friends, I am only one of you: I have no magic means to accomplish miracles, but this Truth I have. If we aim at truth, happiness, love—we *must* make the sacrifice, every one of us, rich and poor, influential and humble. We *must* supply the conditions for the miracle to happen. We must nurse this ideal deep in our hearts, forget the buying and selling of our spiritual gifts, give, give freely, as it was given to us, freely and lovingly. Only then shall we hear real music, see inspired works of art, see happy faces, and the colossal *army* of unemployed recede in the

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dark pages of history. Only then our daily life will become heaven.

I hear also the few half sympathetic voices of those who have long thought the same thoughts, nursed the same ideal. This golden age *may* come, I hear them say, but after many, many generations, a long evolution of mankind; neither we, nor our children nor grandchildren, may see it accomplished.

Against this let me plead. Truly, if we and our children will for ever remain passive, feebly fold our hands before the great task, sink down at the roadside in a hopeless despair, then indeed can we have no hope of conquering the dragon we have built ourselves by this very indolence and self-indulgence. The time is ripe for rising up in arms against the evil if it is not to get more and more the better of us. Is it not *bad enough* as it is? Shall we wait for more and more suffering to be sent to us to bring us to our senses, to our duty?

But then, is it not all a bogey? Take to pieces the greatest of modern evils, the injustice of one being sick and helpless from overwhelming richness, the other sick and

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helpless from poverty? What is it all made of? Simply ignorance, greediness, selfishness. There is really no *organic* impossibility of re-establishing justice. As soon as we realise what brotherhood is, we shall feel revulsion towards our own crime, then the only solution, no longer difficult, but desirable and lovable, will be to give up all unearned privileges, to share, to give, to be one of the brothers, not one of the hated tyrants and usurpers.

Let us begin in a very small way, in little groups of justice and of service. Let us unite in these efforts wherever we happen to live, and do our duty to our neighbours.

## II

### The Misuse of Machinery

AT the bottom of our hearts we know full well that there must come a day when we shall have to act, and that the only successful action in this stage of the world's development must be united action. This day of battle must come!

But just as in war the sword and arrows, then the heavy gun, have been superseded by modern improved machinery for use on land and sea (and now in the air), so must our tools be improved — our methods considered or reorganised.

Therefore let us meet, in this chapter, in true fellowship, in order to think over the question which seems to grow more and more difficult every day, as the power of the machine-world increases.

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## THE MISUSE OF MACHINERY

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Sweating—the competition of two unequal powers (machinery and the human hand), competition under unequal conditions: machinery backed by capital, and handwork backed by dire misery and poverty—is the modern method of industrialism.

A machine costs money, therefore it is well kept and cared for. A human body seems to cost nothing, therefore it is badly kept, and not cared for at all.

Should not these methods of life be obsolete, inefficient, and criminal? Are there no others more humane?

In this chapter we shall consider the means by which, under *present* conditions, we could bring fresh breezes of the waking consciousness, of the sanctity of work, into some corners of its sphere at least—consider whether it were not possible, by love and wisdom, by devoted efforts and international interest, to create and supply conditions for a miracle of happy work to happen.. One may call it compromise.—Perhaps after ages of suffering we may be glad to take even this way of compromise humbly, if by so doing one can try to improve the *minutest particle* of existing evils.

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The method of cure is a matter of temperament. Some form principles and theories for good things to come for humanity, somewhere, sometime, and never seem to claim the realisation of these good things at once, under their very eyes, brought about and helped by their very hands. Indeed, my friends, have we yet begun *living* our lofty ideals? I think not. Have you ever seen an *earnest, strong-willed* man or woman who did not succeed in shaping the circumstances of their lives sooner or later in their own way? If this be not true, then all such theories as that thought is a deed, or that thoughts are things, are childish dreams. But thoughts are real and develop into acts, so there is plenty of hope for us—who are ready to give our efforts, our lives, if need be, to establish the forgotten truth that work and love are one. If we are *earnest* we shall succeed, no matter how many mistakes we may make on our way, nor how many thorny paths we may have to walk through.

Just at this moment we will not touch in any way the work of artists, musicians, writers, poets, or preachers. The tangle before our

eyes is too big, too motley. And also, we believe earnestly, that those who, like them, came nearer than any of us to God on the wings of their gifts, are already thinking these thoughts themselves, and preparing a grand epoch of momentous importance. They all tend to the same goal.

We shall dwell, in our minds, among those more humble workers who toil and fret in all corners of this earth—toil so unceasingly that they almost forget their former freedom, are almost hopeless of brighter days. In this state of helpless despair—brought about by ages of disharmony and injustice, by a broken law of equilibrium—the toiler has no more time nor energy to think, to create, to fight. Someone must intervene, must take his cause to heart, must plead, must find the way where help lies, must think for him as for his own self, must take his suffering as his own. If this will be done, half of the evil will recede.

When we hear of the idle poor, of their improvidence, of their vices and dirty habits—we get into a tangle, we suffer and are lost in controversies. What should we say

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of a doctor, who, finding a patient showing symptoms of typhus, cholera, or any other dangerous disease, should get hysterical, and run away to avoid such awful things? What are dirty habits, improvidence, and all the rest of it, among the "poor," but *symptoms* of a more dangerous disease, which originated ages ago, and is eating away humanity, like cancer? It was brought about by injustice and ignorance, and the selfishness of men. Yet we pronounce it a God's curse, and run away, in order not to pain ourselves by the sight of these symptoms; and we allow children and younger men and women to fall into the same pit of horrors!

The disease has many symptoms, many degrees of development. At some of its stages one can see plainly how a well-regulated hygienic treatment may bring to the patient recovery, comparative health and strength.

There are some very numerous centres of handicrafts, for instance, in France, in the valley of the Rhone. The "petites industries"—or what are called "cottage industries" in England—are reigning supreme there.

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They are little noticed by the big world's press, it is true, but there it is a little world of its own. If you were to spend one of your holidays there, and decide upon a good walking tour through the sunny, smiling valley of the Rhone, from village to village, leaving behind all hurry and worldly conception of time, just giving yourself up to the present joy of life and movement, entering into this new rural world with an open heart and keen, observing eyes, you soon would find as much as did once a famous traveller, Ardouin Dumazet, to whose twenty-seven volumes I may refer those who like to investigate further. Every village seems to have its own characteristics, its own sounds and ways. In some of them folks are making pipes, nothing but pipes of sweet briar; in others violins—and then you see the idea of the violin in all stages of evolution, everywhere, up to the very roofs, drying, bleaching, ripening, and what not. Further we find a little factory which produces only one shapeless thing, in great masses—the celluloid; and round it a group of villagers shaping this mass into all sorts of elegant or useful things

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too numerous to mention. And we hear of a peaceful evening, when the father rests in his garden among his little ones, watering his flowers and peas, and looks happy and independent.

There are some groups of villages in Austria, the famous Zakopane district, where the old Slavonic craft of wood-carving—brought from ancient days of the Middle Ages right into the twentieth century—took lately (some twenty to twenty-five years since) a fresh impetus, with the help of some of those idealists who could not succeed in losing their love for the beautiful; and the district is now covered with schools and workshops, in fact has become a sight-seeing resort for tourists. The old traditions are sacredly kept by the leaders and teachers, but the twentieth century is clearly embodied in them, adding to the expression of the old Slavonic heart its new story of experiences. One needs only to go to the church on Sunday, and have a look at some young mother with her baby, to have a quaint picture of living history and symbolism. Those who never saw the fine, artistic, most

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elaborate garments of the baby; its little embroidered cap; every little detail of its clothing up to the richly embroidered snow-white cover (which might be classed amongst church embroidery by reason of its symbolism); or the rosy, healthy face of the mother in her picturesque cap—also snow-white and embroidered—would hardly believe such a thing could be yet in existence in our time of hurry and disharmony. Truly, the eyes of men, women, and children in this part of the world, feeding, as they are even now, on beauty in nature, beauty in attire, and beauty in heart, are still in a stage of development where they can be helped, where they must be helped. Wise friends, is it absolutely necessary to have those graceful images broken, distorted, and soiled, before they enter into a new cycle of progress? Could we not spare them the vulgarities of our so-called civilisation of to-day? Could we not be benefited ourselves by helping them through this stage of evolution, preserving all the best of the past, the traditions of excellent workmanship, up to the next rung of the ladder? Help is wanted for the *protection* of the craftsman in

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this dangerous passage from work as a natural expression of spirit to work meaning manufacturing of goods in order to earn money, where land has become scarce, and its tiller is obliged to take to some by-industry.

Under *just conditions*—which are bound to come when we alter our attitude into a *just attitude* of brotherhood—the tiller of the land, having plenty of scope for his activity, will not need to produce “goods” of any other kind but the greatest produce of all—the food of humanity—the natural fruits of the earth. But during the leisure time allowed to him while Nature rests and gathers forces, he, obedient to his mother, will also rest and gather strength; all his practical gifts will come into play, and the experiences gathered through the heavy summer work will flow freely through the functions of his intellectual gifts. This may find expression in many unexpected, undreamed-of ways of beauty. Because good seed in good conditions produces good fruit. We have forgotten the taste of such fruit, because we have made its growth a torture.

But I will take you now to some corners of

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## THE MISUSE OF MACHINERY

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the world in Russia, and show some forms of industries.

Here is a small old town in central Russia. Its best street is not much of a street ; a few brick houses, a few shops and bakeries, a market - place with a good many deserted store-houses, a quaint, straggling little house or shed, with the public old-fashioned scales, where on market-days the peasants weigh their loads of grain, hay, and other produce, when they are fortunate enough to dispose of them. This town is surrounded by a motley crowd of still smaller houses, some of them mere huts, made of logs and thatched with straw, radiating from the outskirts of the town in all directions along the roads into the country. These minute, insignificant, grey-looking houses contain a larger population than the town itself. They belong to the so-called burgher class. The little town stands on a brisk little river, and once was a centre of grain traffic, but the modern railway system shifted this centre to a new place, and the commercial significance of this little town collapsed, the storehouses were deserted, and the inhabitants of the suburbs,

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who used to get their living in a good many ways round about the once flourishing towns, were left in desolation. No land, no earnings, no labour of any kind required any more!

Then in those days women saved the day. One by one they took to gold embroidery and tapestry-weaving and leather work, led at first by nuns who had had these industries at their finger-ends for ages. Soon these church embroideries gave place to a more popular kind of goods, such as slippers, bags, and cushions, the tapestry weavers making children's girdles and ties, also tapestry slippers and trimmings. The leather workers manufactured the same easily sold, useful goods in their own technique. The goods were bought and sold by ordinary drapers in large towns. Later, another element came in and added a new feature to the industry of this suburb—now widely known. The War Office gave large orders for embroidered devices, badges, and numbers for different regiments, both for officers and men. Of course, these new and important orders were managed through middlemen and carried on

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for many years without the public ever taking any interest in the matter. Even the nearest neighbours, even the local administration—the county council—never paid any attention to what was going on in the suburbs. The busy workers were there, their laborious lives also ; one could not help seeing their faces bent ever over the frames, close to the small windows ; the brilliant shops in the two capitals with all the showy, gold-embroidered goods, so well known as Torjok-industry, were in everybody's eyes. Yet no one ever tried to enter into the sphere of work, to learn how it is paid and managed. This indifference of the unthinking public is everywhere the best hot-bed for sweating and degradation. It came to Torjok, nearer and nearer ; the coils of the sweating monster squeezed tighter and tighter—and the victims still clamoured for work.

Then a new era dawned upon the struggling workers. The first ray of compassion came from a good man, a member of the local Zemstvo. The thought suddenly dawned upon him that it was his duty to examine how these neighbours of his fared, how these

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victims of taxation, levied by the very Zemstvo of which he was a member, were served. He went from house to house, and the information he obtained made him think, and think deeply. Why! it seemed as if he were plunged into hell itself, or into a very pit of crime, where the evil doer went about at his own will, subjugating all under his own boot by the power of his money. and no one else had anything to say to it. It was the prerogative of the spider to entangle and suck the feebly moving fly.

The good man thought and thought, then he made a decision. He went to St Petersburg and to the War Office. Among the many thousands of big and small wheels and screws of this elaborate institution he found at last the spring of the machinery. He gathered courage, obtained and signed a contract for so many embroidered badges and symbols for the various regiments, studied the designs and samples, obtained the materials, and returned to his little old-fashioned Torjok. He engaged a young lady by the month to distribute the work among the embroiderers, and receive and pay for it when finished. A new wheel was thus

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added to the activity of the local Zemstvo, a new field for study and justice—a real work of love, was it not ?

The next few weeks and months were like the working of an immense beehive, with a new queen. At the end of this period, the good man went to the War Office again, delivered the goods, received the money for them, and signed a new contract for more work.

Then came an amazing surprise. There was far, far more money than what they paid to the workers. He calculated again and again, hardly believing in the possibility of such a gain. Then he gave directions to add something like 50 per cent. to the former scale of payment. The workers fervently crossed themselves, yet, old in experience, kept their joy in their own patient hearts.

A few more months—another delivery of goods—still more surplus money coming—another rise of the wages ! All this went on with progressive rapidity. In his official report—which I read with a beating heart at the great Exhibition of the Coronation Year—

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on a worn-out MS. attached to the splendid exhibits, the leader put it very quaintly: "At last the wages reached 60 cop. a day (1s. 2d.), after which we considered them so abnormally high that we abstained from raising them any more, and devised another plan of investment." They organised a permanent department of cottage industries as part of the County Council's functions, took a house for the offices and stores, and started another branch of lace-making, reviving, as they went along, the ancient designs from a rich collection of lace lovingly preserved by one who loved beauty. Just now, after eighteen years of steady progress, the centre has grown, and trained artists have joined their efforts. At present these industries are in great demand all over Russia, and have a local wholesale dépôt.

I do not mean to say that all the leading management is ideal and no better ways could be found, yet I note this instance with gratefulness, because it shows how much could be done even under the present commercial conditions of the labour market. It inspires hope and demonstrates some of the

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lines upon which the industries may be improved.

Such living instances of work, in their manifold conditions, will help us to formulate our own scheme, and choose our improved tools for the battle of life.

### III

#### Why Return to the Crafts?

A MAN who had fallen asleep fifty years ago would be amazed, on awaking at the present day, to find how great a change had taken place in the world's consciousness and doings. Humanity seems to have "turned the corner," broken the fetters of materialism, and taken wings for higher planes.

No wonder that this intense change brings great stress, not only in individual progress, but in the life of whole nations. In adapting ourselves to these new aspirations, we seem to have to change the whole of our being, inch by inch. A new light, a new understanding, all our lives and the world's work has to be revised as well.

In the nineteenth century we valued our efforts by the world's appreciation and success.

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## WHY RETURN TO THE CRAFTS?

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The majority worked for a name and for money. Here and there appeared a great soul that took no account of these, but gave to the world his or her work out of love for humanity. He or she may have had a brilliant position in the world, or may have been a mere peasant, whose name lives only in the memory of those to whom he gave his loving and uplifting help, but neither can have enjoyed the true appreciation of the world, at any rate during their earthly lifetime, because the world was not ready to accept their standard of living.

It is not for me to say how much the world has progressed in changing its standard, I only feel that the time has come when we may begin to consciously revise our attitude towards man's work, which is the very expression of his life, and try to disentangle the accumulated errors of ages.

If work is the expression of the soul, if earthly life is the means of evolution, then *work must be one with love*. Any other standard will lead away from the right path of progress.

By the modern standard, work is divided into two distinct classes : the *professional* work

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of artists, artisans, writers, tradesmen; also heavy labour which is *paid* for, and a vast sphere of work which is not paid for. There is also work of men who follow their inborn instinct of love for some particular pursuit to which they feel especially attracted, giving to it all their leisure, often "stealing" hours from sleep and rest. This is called vaguely a *hobby*. Or the work of women who bear and rear children, prepare the food and the clothing, and serve as a centre of love and warmth to a human family—sometimes as a centre of the high ideals that shall carry each member of it through life unscathed and pure.

This work is so little respected, perhaps just because it is not *paid* for, that even the woman herself falls into the error of thinking that her life is a failure and a waste of time, to compare with her single sisters who have professional work in hand. This *feeling of failure* burdens the best of women and makes their work heavy, their bodies limp, their spirit drooping. Thus the work which should be the source of joy becomes often misery.

And what of professional work? In the first place we have the work of artists,

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## WHY RETURN TO THE CRAFTS?

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scientists, lawyers, priests, ministers, teachers, medicos, writers, etc. All these require special gifts, so well termed "callings."

The call may be felt in childhood, may shine as a bright ideal in the awakening mind of the child, may come in dreams and moods, may fill the heart with yearning towards a great devotion and sacrifice of his being to this one bright ideal. Such a child is speedily taken through the ready-made routine of special cramming misnamed education—the dogma of the world's salvation, steadily developed by a systematic course of awards, prizes, scholarships. The ethereal petals of the dream-flower are torn one by one, all fanciful conceptions of heroic self-sacrifice stamped with contempt, and the rules of so-called "common sense" (in reality only sale-price) substituted. Then the young man or woman faces the "world" and tries to get what is most valued—name or money.

This road is too well known. We all know who succeeds the best, and we all forget those who were left behind on the roadside, panting and exhausted. It is only the name of the victor that survives. For how long is the

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poet, the musical composer, to be judged by the publisher, the painter by the millionaire's purchase, the doctor by his record of operations, the teacher by the number of successfully "coached" pupils? As long as the audience, catered for by publishers, theatre-managers, concert agents, etc., will not think for itself, will not develop its original, deeply-felt human needs, its own ideals. Here and there are individuals who begin to find all the ready-made things provided for them inadequate. They want a new literature, new art, new religion, a new attitude to each other, a new conception of duties. Instead of the *competition* ruling this world at present, they want *co-operation*. Instead of *war*—patriotic or otherwise—they want *peace*. Instead of *subjugation* of other nationalities, they want *brotherhood*. The world begins to be filled with the spirit of search, in all realms of human thought and emotion. The veil of class distinction begins to wear out. Here and there appear single souls penetrated by Divine love, be they aristocrats or peasants, who long to give, not to take, who seem to be endowed with wonderful power to attract men and

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## WHY RETURN TO THE CRAFTS?

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form centres of a new order of life, which may appear under many names, but which mean only one—*love*.

In my own country—Russia—this movement is very clear and powerful. Individuals and large organisations may be misunderstood and misnamed, may even misunderstand each other in their ardent anxiety to find truth, to find the God of their love; but any thinker holding in his hands all these many-coloured threads of life would find the one golden thread of love running through each of these organised or single efforts. Each form of expression will find its special workers. We know that this transfiguration has already begun in our midst. Among artists, musicians, poets, preachers, and doctors are born some who bring a new inspiration to the concrete expression of their arts. Among the various classes of men are born some who cannot possibly tolerate the old cruel customs, and innumerable centres form to fight against war, vivisection, slavery, prostitution, cruelty of all kinds. We welcome them each and all.

A large sphere of work impresses us mightily, and seems by its very magnitude to deserve

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the greatest attention from the most gifted workers, from all the loving hearts of men and women in all countries ; because without this very work, which goes on unceasingly all through the world, none of us could live even a single day. The faithful workers of the world keep the wheels of our civilisation turning. We wake each morning to find food brought to our tables from different countries, the letters brought by post, the daily newspaper delivered. Because of the faithful performance of daily duties by millions of men and women, the trains and steamers are on time, the "undergrounds" and trams and "buses" carry multitudes to their duties, the shops are opened, the telephones are answered, the coal is mined, the factories are in operation, etc. This work is performed by millions of men and women throughout the ages, and is the hardest, heaviest, the least paid for, the work that blinds the eyes, bends the spine, makes horny hands, and shortens life.

How can this be ? Is not work a blessing and a joy ? Can anyone be happy in idleness ? There must be something wrong in it. Aye ! the greatest wrong, the most cruel wrong,

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that fills our slums, and transforms work into labour, a blessing into a curse. Because no breaking of a law, consciously or unconsciously, shall take place with impunity.

It is impossible to find the moment in history when the law was first broken, or the first man who broke it. But anyone who shirks his duty, his work, putting it on to someone else; anyone who lets a day pass without bringing into it his share of work, who takes without giving—anyone who did this in prehistoric times or on this very day of the twentieth century is guilty of overthrowing the balance, and must inevitably share in the results. And we do share them painfully. The more refined the nature, the heavier lies the burden. Both soul and body, worker and idler, are affected. The growing number of diseases of the body, the growing misery of the mind, depression, pessimism, suicides, insanity, all these have their root in disharmony brought about by the overthrowing of the balance.

The evil seems so universal, so colossal, that one is awed to silence, to inaction. Now, may we dare to touch this evil accumulated

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by ages? Will it not crumble over our own heads? If it does, a new, purer system will be built, and out of the long suffering a lesson will be learnt and the evil eliminated. We well know that the motive, the attitude of mind directs all the world's doings. Therefore, as soon as the ideals are raised the motives change, and the material world will be shaped accordingly.

Our duty seems clear, and points to reform of work. We have to change the *standard* of *valuation*, and, above all, to change our own conception of work as a necessary evil, and regard it as a blessing. If such will be the attitude, no one but the depraved will wish to shirk it. Let us hope that there will be fewer and fewer who will care to be among the depraved, as soon as a strong public opinion is formed. Even now the millionaire feels his guilt in accumulating riches he cannot even spend, and tries to buy a good name in public opinion by making large donations to so-called charitable institutions. His *modus operandi* is as follows:—He begins by attacking the old-fashioned handicrafts. He introduces a machine which does the work (with

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automatic perfection) of a hundred men and women, throwing some ninety-five of these out of work, and making the remainder its mute slaves.

The earnings of the ninety-five men and women thus thrown out of work become his. Delightful! It follows that hundreds, thousands, and millions of workers are in the long run deprived of a livelihood.

Another evil arises. The unthinking machine has produced more goods than are needed by the home market. This is a serious point, which should turn the attention of employers of machine work in the right direction. But no. One evil brings another. They are now obliged to find new markets. War and bloodshed follow. Church and government support this need of the few, who are termed the nation, to the detriment of the many, who are but vaguely thought of under the head of *loafers*. Bitterness grows. And this is still going on through force of habit and selfishness.

A neglected house full of dirt and vermin will continue to be a curse to everyone who lives in it, a hot-bed of disease, grumbling,

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quarrels, and crime, 'til comes some brave woman who is not daunted by the filth accumulated, but sets her heart on mending the evil, on making it sweet and wholesome, because she is one who cannot tolerate dirt and discomfort.

Should we not do the same with the bigger house? Try to re-establish justice and sweetness of work? If we succeed even in a small way in one little corner of the big house, we may make it so happy and attractive that the great purifying process will spread far and wide, and shed its blessing everywhere.

Indeed, the process has already begun. In many countries there are forming little nests of loving work of all descriptions. Some of them work and move half-consciously, just because they personally cannot help it; some are moved by Divine striving to help others, to better and purify their surroundings, reading the lesson of daily bread in a broad, loving way.

This is the leading idea of the International Fellowship of Workers.

Friends, our dreams may not come true—our dreams of co-operating nations, with big

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centres of exchange for work and knowledge ; of mutual confidence and love, and the revival of the beautiful crafts of past ages, with the addition of new experience and understanding ;—our dreams of the re-establishment of rural life, refined by all the lessons learnt so painfully, and producing—instead of a crowd of ridiculously dressed fashion plates—a healthy race of people, true citizens of the world and masters of their lives and work. Perhaps these dreams may not come true so very quickly, but we may at least hope that in the efforts towards international co-operation a greater degree of *unity* will be reached.

I often hear people say : “ Why *should* we return to the old traditions, to the old crafts ? Has not humanity outgrown them, and worked out better ideas ? ” In reply to this, I point to the immense store of spiritual treasures we have derived from the wisdom of the ancients. I truly believe that in the case of the revival of crafts the same observation holds good, and that it is not a question of going back, but of acquiring *new* knowledge, *new* insight. I feel that the Builders of human progress have also spoken to us from the remotest ages in out-

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ward symbols and forms of exquisite beauty. To decipher them, and disentangle them from ignorant handling and darkness—distortions of all kinds,—is a noble task and a true beginning.

## IV

### Service : The Inspiration in Work

WHEN man entered for the first time the fragrant temple of nature—a temple of cosmic, endless, unceasing, and orderly work, a temple where everything was beautiful and harmonious—man's work began, and one can truly say that the idea of work was the first idea of man in his first degree of evolution. At first, the traces of his work, as expressed in his dwelling, garments, and tools, hardly introduced disharmony into the Temple of Isis. The man was yet so near to Mother Nature that he hardly stood out of her garments, finding shelter in the forests and caves, getting up and going to sleep with the sun, feeding, propagating, and multiplying along with other of earth's creatures. But his destiny was different. Unconsciously obedient to Fate, he took his

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evolution into his own hands, and during thousands of centuries changed not only his own being, but the whole face of the earth. The idea of work broadened, changed, became distorted in every direction—but work always reflected its creator, man. Many, one may say the majority of men, are delighted with the results of man's work : these overpopulated cities full of turmoil, commerce (devoid of the first necessity of men—fresh air), these well-regulated armies and fleets circulating through seas and oceans, these throngs of States and Dominions of the globe, these refined amusements (counterbalanced by periodical famines), these swift means of locomotion through land, water, and air. People are delighted even with the wonders of modern architecture representing such a mass of cumbersome, inharmonious lines and forms in complete contradiction with surrounding nature, and a crushing abundance of straight lines and angles, and coarse colour vibrations. It is not for me to judge the merits of civilisation. Man learns by mistakes, and I mention this epopee of work only to show the thorny path on which man travelled, learned, fell, and seemed to try hard

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## SERVICE: THE INSPIRATION IN WORK

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to exhaust the patience of Mother Nature. On this path the idea of work lived through a cycle of mistakes and distortions, which at last have brought us to the present moment, when it has become evident to many that we have come to a deadlock, and are compelled to take up this question and find the causes of the *impasse*.

Every mistake, every sin, brings its result : every dissonance will torment us, till we resolve it into harmony. They say, in common parlance, that every trespass is punished. And our life has become so full of these punishments, the discordant note sounds so intrusively, that we cannot escape it, especially as our ears become more sensitive.

The crime was committed and is committed still, consciously or unconsciously, by everyone who forgets or does not strive to learn man's destination in the world, and his place in nature ; in short, the crime is committed every time that the motive is egotism. It happens whenever a man imagines that he represents a detached independent unit in the cosmos, without a definite communal duty towards its whole and towards each member of this whole ;

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it happens whenever a man throws off his duties which became irksome because he never looked into their deep significance but merely indulged in satisfying his lower, selfish desires, taking the means for the end, and not using them as tools given him by nature for a loyal fulfilment of his duty in harmony with the scheme of the cosmos. The first man who put his burden on his neighbour was indeed the first trespasser. And each of such acts played the rôle of the "False Coupon," so eloquently described by Tolstoy. The evil multiplied with striking, dreadful rapidity. The first burden put on somebody else's shoulders, or someone who was obliged to submit, originated SLAVERY. And work turned into LABOUR. The idea of serfdom is well known and analysed. Everyone knows it, yet many do not apply this category when the master and the slave are outwardly free. Unfortunately its more refined symptoms which fill our lives usually escape our consciousness. The modern slave does not require the obsolete form of chains and whip: he willingly stretches out his hands for the heavy burden—he even fights his comrade for

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## SERVICE: THE INSPIRATION IN WORK

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it; nevertheless, without chains and whip, he is as securely tied and punished as the slave of bygone days.

A modern researcher who would undertake to investigate the idea of work in its modern conditions, without looking into the depth of phenomena, might indeed come to the absurd conclusion that work is a necessary evil which a man is obliged to bear. One bears it with a hope of deliverance; another with curses and bitterness. But, looking deeper and putting aside all outward attributes brought about by ages of man's self-will and egotism, we shall see another picture.

We have not understood the words of the Old Testament where God curses the land. These words are always quoted apart from the text. But the parable expresses a truth concerning the essence of things. When God says to Adam: "I will curse the land for thy sake," it is not an arbitrary punishment but an expression of grace, a sacrament.

Mrs Mary Boole, in her book, *The Message of Psychic Science*, speaks of the wonderful healing power of work, and explains how,

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during the process of work, we in reality receive a vital force from the unseen.

Any one of us, surely, has had the experience of this beneficent influence of work, when we worked not for self, but inspired by the idea of serving someone else, a friend, or society at large. We recollect this experience almost with envy—these moments when the body drooped with fatigue, and the Spirit rejoiced and ascended.

What a life-giving sleep usually followed such work! What a pity if such work were an exception!

It is a difficult task to unravel such a tangled skein of threads extending from past ages, threads endlessly diverse, reflecting an endless number of souls, each having brought into the work his own expression, temperament, taste, inclinations, love, or curses.

When we begin to look into this more thoughtfully, there will come gradually a vision of the radiating energy of that real work, which brings joy and light, is created by love, and, in its turn, generates love and beauty.

An artist loves his work who does not

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consider his earnings as its main aim, who rises above this ordinary attribute of his profession. He shuts himself up from all outward influences, his comrades, and many other things which so recently attracted him and smiled on him. He needs only solitude, light, and his palette. All the rest, if he be a real artist, he finds in himself. He burns with love for this image which he is to picture: its slightest trait is brought from the depths of his soul, in perfect oblivion of the outer world, sometimes in ecstasy. In these moments he reaches that penetration of which only an artist is capable. Fixing it on the canvas, he presents the world with a priceless gift, which will ever radiate on every onlooker the same penetration, the same love, and will wake the individual forces of each soul. Such are the pictures of true artists, which attract to Italy people from every part of the world, and such will be again the pictures of artists, as soon as they purify themselves of outward conditions which clog the channels of inspiration.

The scale of work is endless. Having taken an example at a relatively high

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state of inspiration, let us now consider its lower degrees and see what laws are working there.

Here is a rye field, waving like a sea, perpetually reflecting heavenly clouds as does a sea. The hedges are aglow with bright poppies, cornflowers, and fragrant sweet maudlin. The air is full of sounds and fragrance. What heart can remain indifferent to this harmony of work and nature! What a satisfaction to the worker who created this field! What a rich source of strength, health, and goldy-locked visions for a town dweller! What an inspiration breathes from every wave of the golden rye! And many, many dreams and visions will the poor town-dweller have, standing there in this peaceful field comparing it with his sad, grey days, spent among crowded tables in his office, shop, or restaurant, and at night the exhausting green tables! Every moment of creation of this field is full of beauty, all are in harmony with nature. The resting field, under the snow-white coverlet, with roads and way-marks all along them, and the spring blue shadows of the melting snow, and the waking up of the

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warbling rivulets, and the joyful arrival of birds, and the field resplendent in the hot spring sun, with the figure of the peasant walking after his horse and plough with the crows circling round him, and the velvety, green young winter-corn—all, all is full of beauty, and here is the crown of the field holidays, when the larks fill the whole countryside with their songs, the very symbol of joy. And the field of ripe rye, and the field after the harvest, when the heavy sheaves are put into orderly ricks, how often have they inspired artists and poets, and given shelter to a tired wanderer! And even when everything is taken away, and the field seems empty and deserted, try to stand for a little while in silence and concentrate your thoughts: you will experience a great wave of satisfaction, a chord of fulfilled duty, a strong certainty of union with nature, and you will feel not like a tiny insignificant blade of grass, but as a favourite child, the very flesh and spirit of nature.

These are not invented pictures. Every one of us has seen them, and, if these moments are rare, alas! too rare, we are alone to blame for

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it, or rather our errors, which darken the meaning of work.

The sphere of work is so large that there is not the slightest possibility of examining it systematically in these few pages. I should like only to touch the main foundation, and investigate the influence of the laws of work on its result.

In our two examples of work, although we have taken them from two extreme ends, we can see the same laws working. No one will deny that the picture of the artist will express the more beauty, will influence and penetrate the spectator the more strongly, the more love and penetration were brought into it by the artist, the freer he was from selfish motives, the more fully he expressed his spirit.

In the second example of the agricultural work the principle is much more veiled? We are so far gone from the plough that the emotions of this sphere are quite foreign to us, and we touch it usually in a spirit of artificially made up, unjust relations, which have dug a deep abyss between us. The peasant argues and analyses very little, being overburdened

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by the claims of all the other classes. He it was who received on his shoulders the bulk of the burden from other shoulders, as his work is the heaviest and also the most necessary for the existence of men. This last condition of work overcasts its outward expression. Yet one can see clearly that this work carries all those properties which create beauty and harmony. No one will deny, I believe, that the peasant loves his field, his fellow-worker, his horse; loves his visions of the coming crop, of the modest well-being of his family which it will bring. I also think that no one will deny that the peasant brings into his work not only love, but also obedience to the Higher Power, however we may call it: Nature. Cosmos, God. This obedience—natural to all who do not yet separate themselves from the land—explains this inconceivable vitality of the peasant and his traditions. More than any other class of men, he remains in harmony with the basic laws of Nature. If we could for one moment imagine that the peasants of all the world declined to produce corn, we should have at the same time to imagine the end of human existence. No

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bread—no life. And it seems to me that this precious industry of the greatest produce of the world, the grain, should command a more careful and wise handling. But it is not so. Everywhere the peasants enjoy the least wages, the least comfort, and the least esteem. What, then, if this love and obedience to the Higher Power are not able to preserve these workers for humanity?

Perhaps the peasant gets his reward too, not only in his hope of future rest and well-being, somewhere in the unseen spheres, but in the present, hard as it is to believe looking upon his burdensome life. Perhaps the sky and the sun beam on him just as on us, and the gladsome song of the lark penetrates his soul by a life-giving ray. Perhaps Mother Nature wraps him up, her nearest son, in an even greater magic than the town dwellers can imagine, being so far from her garments. Is not this the mystery of his stability, in spite of all the modern perversions brought by modern conditions.

Thus in these two kinds of work we clearly see the main basis of work, *i.e.* Love, the true expression of the soul, Creativeness and

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Service, *i.e.* absence of selfishness. As soon as these laws are violated, harmony and beauty disappear.

With the first transgression of justice, with the first manifestation of selfishness—when a man for the first time allowed himself to put his burden on another's shoulders—the attitude towards work also changed. Instead of thankfulness for the help, there appeared contempt for the slave who accepted the burden. And this contempt multiplied, strengthened, underwent all forms of serfdom, from its coarsest manifestation up to our days, when the serf has the look of a free man, does not go naked, does not wear chains, and has a vote: when the slave owner does not threaten with the whip, but correctly offers the heavy burden, and himself, usually, acts as a slave in other spheres. I would like to say a few words on this very attitude towards work, and I wish I had words which could express all the experiences I have gone through, and all that I have seen behind work, with which I have had to do for these last twenty years.

The attitude alone is in our hands. We are

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unable to at once destroy all the injustice of work ; we are unable to remove the heavy burden from shoulders which are giving way, and threaten to throw it off in despair ; but it is in our power to change our attitude towards work.

But this attitude cannot change, while the majority think it right to earn in *any way* by the first handy work, while earning and the mere accumulation of wealth is the sole aim. It is very strange that, in spite of the high culture and ethical influences arising from all sides and from all ages, the ideals of work are yet in their infancy. In other directions our standards are much more advanced. For instance, if a young girl weds an old, rich man, without loving him, but wishing to have a comfortable life, the attitude towards her action will be quite clear. Anyone will understand that she acted wrongly and dishonestly. And in such marriages the motives are usually carefully hidden. The shame is too great. But to take some work without love—hardly anyone thinks of this as being wrong. As long as one earns money, one may take up any useless or even harmful work.

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A young man or girl has youthful aspirations, strivings after acquiring scientific knowledge. The parents spend much money on "education"; later, he or she may sell whisky or become excise-collector, and honestly believe himself much higher than a cook or a bootmaker. Evidently the standards are mixed. It is not the work they take; work as service is without meaning to them. They take earnings, they perform labour, *i.e.* they enter into slavery. This tangle of conceptions, which has become a habit, produces immense harm, which we ascribe to causes over which we have no control. This erroneous attitude dominates the world, and prevents us from advancing on the right path.

This is proved by considering the two categories of work created by modern ethics—"intellectual" work and "physical" work. A girl-copyist with her elegant Remington, not using her own thoughts or feelings, but copying another's—perhaps even being unable to understand or assimilate the thoughts she copies,—sincerely considers her work as higher than the work of a cook, who has to put many thoughts, much experience and good-will into

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her work. Such "intellectual" work is also considered to be higher than the mother's work, who brings to it daily and nightly her best thoughts and insight, often her self-sacrifice. How heavily weighs this wrong attitude on the mothers! They begin to belittle their work themselves, they speak of "doing nothing," of being "shifted to the side track," of "having sacrificed public interests to egotistical personal life." Yet these egotists do the greatest service to the world. And here, again, we meet with the same striking inconsistency. The most important and necessary work enjoys the least pay and the least esteem.

And our attitude to mechanical work and hand-work is just as wrong and as far from the ideal. The development of machine industry has its own very definite course, and expresses the capitalistic growth of the country. Its history, its abuses, are very well known.

The brilliant success of machine-work has made us nearly forget all about handicrafts. Yet the character of any country, its duration in history, its strength and beauty, lie entirely in its handicrafts. Many ages have gone by

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for Italy, its political life has changed down to the root, its rulers and culture have changed many times. Yet Italy lives even now in what has survived from the work of the Middle Ages. Italy's power, character, and beauty peep out at every step from what is left of its arts and handicrafts. This geographically small country, weak as a State, with a small army and fleet, has yet stamped its character on every civilised European country, and that simply by the power of its handicrafts. Such is the significance of the people's hand-work, which we nearly ignore. We have in Russia scientific societies, which for many years have collected peasants' legends, songs, laments and rites, also garments, utensils, etc.; but all this is done on the eve of the total disappearance of ancient customs and traditions. All this is done by a very small minority. The majority has little interest in it, and, what is more, does not see the significance of folk-arts. The wrong attitude towards hand-work is just what hinders, because work is valued not at its real value, but by a partial token, the price it fetches, by the "earnings."

Summing up what I have said, as to this

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all-important question of man's work, I will emphasise my statement, that WORK is an expression of LOVE. We have seen that all violations of the laws of work, which have brought us to the deadlock of our modern conditions, come from Egotism. Therefore it is logical to substitute Service—Service as the basis of work.

I know full well that we have crowded together many ages of injustice and transgressions. I also know that we are not super-men, and cannot conquer at once this long-lived evil; but what every one of us can do is to act in one's own sphere in harmony with these laws. The study of these laws and the conscientious carrying of them out in life will not bring about vague idealism, but will give a powerful impulse to all our forces.

To live in harmony with these laws will become to us as necessary as food and drink.

# V

## Vegetable Dyes

THERE was a time when every colour used by mankind for clothing and draping was beautiful. The few artists who give us true pictures of the East, even in modern times, show wonderfully harmonious colouring, strong and decided effects under a powerful sunlight. Such impression one gets, for instance, from the Eastern pictures of the Russian painter Verestchagin, whose tragic end during the Russo-Japanese war is probably known to many readers. Very likely he never thought while sketching how the cloths of his subjects were dyed, but just painted them true to what he beheld. But any professional eye would see that those beautiful soft blues, strong brown-reds, the mellowest of greens, could not long remain so in the glaring sunrays of the East reflected

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against white and dazzling yellow sands. Indeed, there would be little colour left under this sun for the artist's brush to catch. Biblical subjects, all of the East, are often represented, it is true, and a variety of colours used to represent the Biblical scenes, but these are mostly painted *ad libitum*, therefore the colouring is not true to the country it represents, nor the time. Ah ! the time is the very greatest obstacle in this case. How can one possibly reproduce the colouring of clothes of people vanished two thousand years ago ?

There is but one way to do it—by studying the methods of dyeing the various fibres the people used in the East twenty hundred years ago. Many more of them have survived than people think. Some are known even in literature, some to a few people so-called uncivilised, some of these elaborate processes the wonderful results of which can be yet seen in museums. Some have been taken away to the Great Beyond, some are practised still, though forced out more and more by the advent of mineral and chemical dyes, which suit our modern manufactures better, as they are cheaper and can be handled as a wholesale commodity,

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whereas the vegetable dyeing is a traditional art which needs individual gifts and experience.

It is probable that the art of dyeing is as old as humanity itself. We speak of the Phœnicians as the first dyers, only because we do not know those who came before them. The first pigment known to us is purpur, discovered by the Greeks at the end of 16 B.C. Some writers make the date 15 B.C. It was made of a certain shell, and was very costly and worn only by royal personages. There are several ancient writers who speak of purpur as one of the most important industries of Lydie.<sup>1</sup> During the first address of St Paul in Filippi, Macedonia, the first convert was a woman by name of Lydia, or one from Lydie, who was a seller of purpur.

It is evident that this art also came to Europe from the East. The South East especially, so rich in varied luxuriant vegetation, was, from time immemorial, the cradle of pigments. The ancient art of Hindus and Chinese we can yet study, not only by the

<sup>1</sup> Pliny, *N.*, vii. 57. Valery Flank, iv 368–369. Claudian, *Rapt Proserp.*, I. 276. Strabson, *xiii.* iv. 14

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surviving specimens preserved in our museums, but also as living methods practised yet in a few corners of the world forgotten by civilisation, both in China and India. The English writer Bancroft informs us that in India they used brushes and "cartridges" for dyeing, and in China boards with carved figures. The latter are still used in Russia, also boards with the pattern traced by copper studs. Though they have totally disappeared in towns, they can be seen at any village dyer's where the peasantry still use hand-made printed linen.

Pliny writes that in Egypt textiles were dyed in a wonderful way. Having covered certain spots (or patterns?) with a colourless substance, the web is then steeped in the dye solution. This solution dyes the stuff only in certain places.

The same is done by Russian village dyers. The usual printed linen is in two colours, blue and white; or the blue may be of two shades, making three different colours. Some more elaborate processes are still existing, and produce a design in many colours. As to the brush mentioned by Bancroft, I came across

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such a method used in Java and producing a very handsome, artistic cloth. It is pleasant to learn that this art has been revived by a Javanese artist.

As to "cartridges," this peculiar method is still used in India, in spite of the speedy disappearance of ancient arts under the influence of English factory culture. In my own collection I have a specimen of such dyeing, brought to me by a friend from India. It looks like a web gathered into innumerable knots tied by a thread, and dyed in rich red-brown colour. When the thread is pulled out, the knots disappear one by one, and a fantastic pattern, of endless shades from pale pink up to rich dark brown, appears.

It is fit to mention here another method of pattern-dyeing used yet in the Caucasus. Buchara, and perhaps in the Far East as well. It is done by tying and wrapping up skeins of silk at well-calculated intervals. The skeins of silk are then dyed in one or more pigments. At each steeping some of the bandages are taken off, till the desired number of colours and shades is reached. When this silk is woven, the colours fall automatically into a

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pattern in soft outlines. Such a weaving was demonstrated in the great Nijni-Novgorod Exhibition in Russia.

The art of using mordants also came from India.

The spread of the art of dyeing in Europe is an interesting subject outside the present article. It is enough to mention that in the eleventh century it came from the East for the *second time*, and came to stay in Italy, and spread from there to other countries. In the fifteenth century Germany and England had already guilds of dyers. In the sixteenth century there existed already a literature on this art. In the eighteenth century, in France, Colber established a permanent commission of members of the Paris Academy of Sciences. Its duty was to watch over the development of the art of dyeing. In 1760, the Minister of Agriculture, Bertin, sent to Smyrna for madder seeds which he distributed among farmers of Southern France. Yet the real development of this branch of agriculture began only when a certain Persian by the name of Alten took it into his hands in 1786. By the end of the nineteenth century, in the

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Department of Vaucluse, the sales of madder reached from twenty to thirty million francs. There is a monument to the memory of Alten erected in Avignon.

One could write volumes on the cultivation of madder in the Caucasus. It also grows wild in many provinces of Russia and in Siberia, on the shores of the rivers Ob and Irtysh. The sale of madder is one of the most important in the art of dyeing, and for some time eclipsed indigo, because the chintz manufacturing of all the world was based on madder. This is why even now we hear so many regrets of the good old times, when the chintzes were "fast" and there was no wearing them out. The French literature is specially rich in this subject. To-day some of these books are sold at extravagant prices. They were published with numerous specimens of the various processes. All this may be revived if the customers will claim really fast and beautiful dyes, and will not mind paying a little higher prices, and refuse to put up with rubbishy colours.

Yet the wholesale annihilation of vegetable dyes happened not so very long ago, after

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the discovery of the aniline dyes, which opened a new page in the science of dyeing. It has turned the once elaborate, individual art of dyeing into a mere mechanical process. Anyone can use the chemical formula to get always the same result. Nowadays you need not even study chemistry to be able to dye stuffs. It is only the dye-producing factory which employs chemists; then the dye is packed and used by any customer on the principle of "press the button." No doubt it was a great discovery, but it killed the beauty of the colouring in stuffs, embroideries, carpets, and everything else; but this is a small thing to compare with the greater evil of killing the conception of beauty in the last two generations of people. You may hear any day a young man or a young lady finding a pretty colour which would make an artist's hair stand on end! We have blunted our perception of colouring, our eyes are so dazzled daily by all the ugliness of colouring wherever we go. The large spots of pink, purple, yellow, and blue on hand-bills alone are enough to blind any sober colour-loving eye. I abstain from

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enumerating all the rest of the colouring, from the sickly shades called "wishy-washy," to violent exaggerations of the aniline which meet us at every corner, stare at us from every shop window, spread through our streets and stagger us in shapes of unnatural feathers and unearthly grotesque flowers from the tops of our ladies' bonnets. Alas! perhaps the chemists never thought their gift of cheap dyes would be so misused! I daresay they did not, or else they would have thought twice before giving it to the world. I do not say that the ancient dyers did not use minerals, indeed one cannot do without them; but they were used mostly as mordants to prepare the wool, silk, flax, cotton, and other vegetable fibres to be more receptive to the dye. The real dye was a real pigment—not open to any new recombination under the influence of sun-rays, damp, or any chemical reagent in air or water. How to use the natural pigments is a noble science, as old as man. Bark, berries, nuts, flowers and grasses, shells, and some insects gave to our ancestors a long range of colours so beautiful and durable that some of them were preserved for many

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thousands of years. I may add here, as an illustration of the degeneracy of the colour sense, even with artists, the fact that of the numerous artists who, in endless succession, come to paint from the relics of Pompeii, the reds of Pompeii do not seem good enough or bright enough to most of them, and they always "improve" on the ancient colouring. It is evident that the *real* thing cannot satisfy the modern sense blunted with the modern *imitation* of it.

Yet the time is not far off when we shall strive to regain what we have lost. The movement has begun already, and is spreading far and wide. Our striving to come back to a more human way of living—not on the wholesale principle, stifled and cramped in commercial centres, but in small centres with plenty of elbow space—is seen in the formation of garden cities and a multitude of homes scattered all round big cities. Indeed, I know some who even choose to live all the year round in tents, and two of my friends live in old omnibuses! I do not consider this as a freak, but rather as a healthy desire to come back to a healthier way of living. The word

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“back” should not be misunderstood. It represents not regress but progress. One who lives nowadays in a tent may be not only more advanced than a nomad of Asiatic Russia living in his movable tent, but far in advance of a Chicago dandy, living on the thirty-second floor of the Great Western Hotel with ten different bells, in the glare of four electric chandeliers and the news of the Exchange passing before his eyes on an endless strip of endless figures. It is no more “back” than the “back to the land” movement.

We are tired of machine work, we are tired of the monotony of ready-made everything. We are afraid to enslave our souls and become like machines ourselves. We wish to secure, at least for our children, the freedom of thought, taste, and aspiration unbiassed by wholesale manufacture, wholesale education, and wholesale amusements. We begin to appreciate individuality, and we are ready to sacrifice some of the attractions of large, crowded centres for the sake of human, healthy life.

This new life springing up spontaneously all over the world, as yet in small nuclei, will

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necessarily develop handicrafts, as they are a direct outcome of such a life, its most salutary feature, the relief for the strained brain, the earning for the needy, the delight of the well-off, the inspiration of the artist.

If this be true, I will undertake to prove that the first letter of this alphabet of beauty is the vegetable dyeing. Just as for an artist the first thing to get is his palette, his colours, so for any weaver, embroiderer, dressmaker, milliner—anyone who has to do with dress and draping—the colouring (or the dyeing) is the first thing to secure.

What our ancestors did we can do, surely. We can do it more easily, with all our facilities of transportation, our centrifugal drying machines, water-supply, etc., etc. A good many pigments could be gathered in Great Britain without applying to foreign countries. Kropotkin writes that Great Britain need not apply for corn to Russia and America if all her land were utilised. It is not for me to discuss these matters, but I may say that it is also the case with the pigment-yielding plants. Even as it is, we have heather growing in profusion, and hardly ever utilised except

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by a few Highlanders to dye their yarn for tweeds. There is also in plenty a seaweed which yields a beautiful red-brown colour, used in Ireland and Scotland for dyeing wools; plenty of underwood which can supply bark for the greys and browns. And if Brazilian indigo is still used all over Russia and gives the best blue known in the world, I do not see why it should not be used here too.

What I am talking about to-day is not only talk or a dream. Very far from it. I have by me some little specimen pieces cut some years ago from large rolls of beautiful stuffs dyed in a little establishment of my own, or bits of wool, flax, and silk from large supplies of embroidery and lace-threads which one day covered long shelves in my store-room. Along with them are a few specimens of madder, barks, heather, various flower-heads, etc., which I used for my pigments.

There are yet in many corners of the world people who practise the art of dyeing in vegetable dyes. In this country, Irish and Scotch still dye their *wools* with solutions of heather, seaweed, etc. It is practised on a

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much larger scale in the East, the further from towns and railways the more so. In some carpet-weaving districts of the Caucasus, aniline dyes are prohibited by law. I am not quite sure how this law originated, but think it may have been under the influence of the French buyers of carpets. The French government also protects the madder plantations. A commission, with chemistry scholars at its head, has the production of French madder in its care. Indigo is still holding its place in the world, but losing ground daily. I have a little exhibit of a London firm dealing in indigo. The manager tells me that Russia is the best customer. Indeed, indigo dyeing is a very usual thing in any Russian village. It is a regular profession, as it requires special experience and training. As a rule, one establishment of this kind does the work for a whole group of villages. Women bring their hand-spun linen thread and woollen yarn, also rolls of woven linens, to be dyed in blue, and the dyer uses the old method of tallies which secures every individual woman her own roll of cloth, or her own spun thread without mistake.

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But the range of colours has become very small. The beautiful ancient clear and pure reds, blues, radiant yellows and greens have disappeared ; only browns, greys, and in a few cases the blues, remain. For the others, people turn to the “ new powders,” which invariably means factory chemical dyes. And it is only woollen yarn for which the vegetable dyes are now generally used, because wool, being an animal fibre, accepts these dyes easier than the vegetable fibre. Anyone can try this experiment. If you make a solution of any dye and boil in it threads of wool, flax, silk, and cotton, you will find that while wool and silk have taken all the shade of colour you had in the solution, the cotton has but a pale reflection of it, and the flax thread hardly any indication of colour.

During the first years of my work with the peasant industries, while trying to reproduce the beautiful designs inherited from ancestors, and their elaborate technique of weaving and embroidery, I obtained wonderful results, and the work of “ illiterate ” women, brought before the public at large exhibitions, was an astonishing revelation, because up to this time all the

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work made for sale and directed by town-bred leaders, was made by girls trained in industrial schools without any regard to the traditional arts and crafts of the country. No one seemed to realise the peasant as an artist, as a true follower and preserver of tradition. The *habit of condescension*, almost contempt for the *manual worker*, prevented this realisation. In our present day, in our present attitude, it seems almost impossible. Look at the ancient garments of the peasantry. Are they not concrete evidence of the peasant's finer conception of beauty than ours? Are they not witnesses of more developed skill?

When I took all these matters in hand, I had not much knowledge myself. My only safeguard, my only guiding star, was an open mind ready to learn, to be content and eager to learn rather than to teach, and a warm admiration for the peasant's work—perhaps, who knows? developed with the aid of my peasant nurse, who loved me just as much as my own mother, and who was a skilled embroiderer. In some way or another, the love of work intermixed with the lore of the Russian fairy-land, the shining designs thrown

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upon the window by Father Frost, interlaced with the warm, fairy-like Orenburg shawls and bridal lace veils, and all this, to my imagination as a child, seemed to be one real world of beauty.

With these conceptions lingering at the bottom of my heart, it is no wonder that any false note introduced in the reproduction of the good old things jarred upon me. This note of discord I found in the wrong colouring. Only real pigment could satisfy me. They say in our Russian tales, Soon are said the words, but slow is done the work. Years passed in my endeavour to find, re-discover, experiment, and bring about methods of vegetable dyeing. I collected specimens of old stuffs, recipes from the days of patriarchal serfdom in Russia, when the noble wife of the serf-owner was considered and called "Mother" (the appellation still remains in our language), and was herself reared in the traditions of direction and management of her own workers. In those days industries flourished in Russia. To-day it is impossible for me to enter into this large field of research. Enough will it be to say that weaving of all kinds, in linen,

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silk, and wool, especially carpet weaving, was in great vogue. The lady of the manor was always an attractive member of these groups of workers, and took pride in the excellency of work done by her own peasants under her own management. I have no doubt some of them had selfish aims, and doubtless some of the workers may have had a lack of true artistic feeling and devotion, but the *practice* of work saved them all from deterioration—this is plainly seen in all surviving industries of old. I found beautiful recipes in old family archives, also in a housewife's many-volumed work published in the beginning of the nineteenth century, which in my youth was despised and scorned by the advanced women of the famous 'sixties, who considered every care of the house as degrading and keeping a woman enslaved. I collected recipes of vegetable dyes everywhere during my constant travels from village to village, from estate to estate, and kept on experimenting.

The inspiring words of W. Morris at the first Arts and Crafts Exhibition still rang in my ears, still spurred me to activity, and made me hopeful and convinced that the beauty

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I seek for my satisfaction will serve all who are on the way to progress, however unfavourable the present circumstances may appear.

At last, in the year 1902, I decided to establish a dye-house. I rented a house with a large yard and garden and convenient out-houses, some ten miles from St Petersburg, and connected with it by an electric railway. I appointed my daughter—artist and pupil of our great Repin—as working manager of this establishment, and took into my family an old peasant woman from a far-off village to dye wools. Her speciality was red, yellow, and green shades. I could fill pages with recounting to you her ways and her atmosphere, but cannot afford the time.

I filled the attic with a supply of birch leaves in the shape of big bundles, always used in the Russian baths as a sort of fragrant sponge, which must be stored in June for the whole year ahead, while the leaves are young and fragrant. I secured 3000 bundles, or rather pairs of bundles, and hung them in the attic. I rebuilt the kitchen, for my purpose, filled it with appropriate pots and small vats

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and large cauldrons. The pantry was turned into a store-room of barks, roots, dried flower-heads, and mordants. The drawing-room was turned into a laboratory, and in one corner of it we put the indigo still or vat. It was made of the largest wine-barrel we could find, so tall, indeed, that my daughter had to work it with an oar, standing over it on a ladder. The usual way of arranging vats is different, but we had no right to cut the floor. The drying grounds were in the yard and, for winter-time, in the attics, and a very imperfect, provoking way it was. A centrifugal drying machine would do the drying quicker and better, as some colours require a quick process of drying to bring out the best delicate shades.

The work began with great devotion. On the way of discoveries devotion *was* needed. Every day seemed to bring trials of all kinds. Sometimes the workers saw and felt nothing but failures. Yet the drying grounds were a wonderful sight to behold, and soon the store-room was filled with dyed stuffs and threads and yarns, and every week large parcels of these materials—produced in Russia for the first time after a lapse of nearly a hundred

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ears—were sent out to our workers in the villages of many provinces.

The princes among the pigments are certainly the madder and the indigo. The addition of yellow would make the scale complete, because *reen* is made of indigo dyed again with yellow, and all the other secondary colours and shades are a derivation of these three fundamental colours, blue, red, and yellow. The yellow is easily received from the yellow daisy (camomile) or heather. The indigo and the madder are the main points of importance.

The madder root is a beautiful little root, waxen in its surface, and has a red heart, which is the seat of the red colour so precious and indispensable for any picture, garment, or decoration of any kind. The madder in olden times was the basis of all shades, before the discovery of Bunsen. But where to get it in its pure state, this was the question. To hunt for something no one knows about or understands or needs is a sad plight, my friends. My old Mordva woman knew only of a man who came once in a year to their village and sold the roots to the women, perhaps a bundle. "He would be coming

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by the day of Intercession to the Virgin," she said, using the peasant calendar and counting the events by the Church holidays. But where this mysterious man got his stock she could not tell, and my telling her of the likely places where madder plantations may be yet flourishing amazed her so much, and gave her so much to think about, that she was practically of no use for any information. Yes, it was not so easy as the "press the button" business of aniline dyes,

At last, through a long chain of "friends," "good fellows," sympathetic postmasters, and doctors, I could take hold of a man in the far-off villages of the Caucasus who undertook to supply me with madder root. I sent the money for it, and after months of anxious waiting, I received 800 lbs. of madder root.

By this time we have passed the elementary class, and have been obliged to give way to our old dyer as to the best way of pounding the madder root. She insisted upon a very archaic arrangement, made of a scooped wooden log similar to a mortar, which could not be found or ordered in the vicinity of the elegant city of St Petersburg. We tried to

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explain to her the superiority of a metal mortar, and she, poor obedient soul, tried her best to pound the quantity of madder roots in it for her daily use; but no, it would not answer, so we got a tremendously heavy parcel from her own village with the obsolete mortar and pestle. She was happy then.

The indigo vat was also an elaborate affair to accomplish. It is usually managed by men. No woman ever attempted this as far as I know, but my manager bravely started this important dye, and succeeded better than an ordinary village dyer, because his aim is only to make it durable, and this he gets by dipping and drying his stuffs many, many times, so that they get black-blue. His customers have the same utilitarian quality in view. They expect to wash the stuff for hundreds of times and to have it still blue. But in our establishment we aimed at a beautiful light blue, and to make *this* permanent is a very difficult thing.

Indeed, these experiments and the awakened interest and observing of some still existing ways of dyeing on my excursions through the villages could form an interesting volume, especially if it could be illustrated.

## VI

### Industrial Colonies

AFTER having agreed upon the imperative need of a different attitude towards work, we naturally come to plan a different mode of life of the workers, a life of mutual help, unity, love, and joy.

The idea of colonies has been often tried, often expressed in the concrete, and often failed. Some continue living, having come after many tribulations, to a certain *régime* that suited their inmates. They always failed when there was no ground principle of service and mutual interest at their root, but gathered under the sole influence of some powerful magnetic personality. As soon as this personal influence was removed, either by death or by strife, the whole thing collapsed one way or another. In some instances a strong

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religious idea, responding to a powerful need of human hearts to seek for God, held thousands of people together for many many years. Shakers in America, Doukhobors in Canada, and no end of such communities—often hidden from the world—in Russia. If people have a common strong ideal they will stick together, and then if one leader dies or fails there is sure to come another. If the common ideal is linked with common economical interest the tie will be doubly strong. In fact I truly believe no colony whatever could be possible, could be lasting without these *two linked together*. One without the other seems unfeasible.

Schemes have foundered because the idea of service, as we understand it now, was not yet ripe; the plans usually attracted those who were not so much constructive as restless, tired of obedience, individualistic to the last degree, thinking rather of themselves than of others, rather of getting than giving.

Industries always have some common ground. Any centre of industry proves it. The more the interdependence, the mutual aid, the more they are cemented and lasting. On the Rhone Valley in France the manu-

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facturers of celluloid hand-made articles are grouped round a factory of celluloid mass. In Russia, the hand-loom weaving, occupying thousands of men and women, is centred round big flax-spinning factories, which, in their turn, have grown upon immense fields specially favourable for the culture of flax. The Schwarzwald carvers are scattered in a district abounding in lumber, and so forth. Severance would mean death.

Here in England where the severance has already occurred, and handicrafts are swept away, we have to build the new conditions thread by thread, patiently and lovingly—I may say the more patiently and lovingly, the less patience and love there is left in the workers of to-day. If we could find this centre, this cement which could hold industrial colonies together, we would have found the real basis of solidarity and lastingness.

I will ask you to consider this:—What makes a whole group of handicrafts—weaving, embroideries of all kinds, also minor crafts and dressmaking and many others—beautiful? What is the greatest element of beauty in all of them? It is *colour*. If any of you have

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doubts about it, a little thinking will soon put you right. For instance, a dress may fit very well, have an artistic shape, be made of silk or wool or linen quite expensive enough and even be elaborately embroidered, but who will think it beautiful if the colouring is bad, or after a walk or two in the sun becomes not faded, but streaked with unexpected shades of nasty purplish, rusty, pinkish colours, as a result of the reagents of the air and sun on the chemical ingredients of the used dyes. And so in embroidery and so in weaving.

If we were to put up an establishment of vegetable dyeing we should provide a basis for hundreds of crafts growing around it and out of it. The weavers would have their material in silk, wool, flax, and cotton at their service ready to put into the loom. The embroiderers, using both the dyed threads and the woven materials, would embroider lasting, symbolical designs, and the dressmakers could avail themselves of the weaving and embroiderers' work, thus forming a cemented community where mutual aid is a spiritual need, an expression of the soul, and at the same time a lasting economical tie and necessity.

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A weaver and an embroiderer cannot produce really beautiful things without this palette of real pigments. If they think they can have an imitation instead of the real, they must come to disappointment and disgust. Some have already come to it. Those who cannot yet discern the imitation from the real will necessarily come to it in this age of wonders, where all values are changing under our eyes, when folks clamour for a new art, new way of living, new literature, new children, stories, etc. Nothing seems to fit because we have outgrown the old errors. The great thing now is to find ourselves in the new condition, and this means the coming into play of all our creative faculties. None but our own efforts will provide this which is clamoured for.

I would like to say a few words on two points about the Industrial Colonies:—The market for the handicrafts and the inner organisation of work.

Suppose for a moment that such a colony has been started in some beautiful place not far from a large town, yet among fields and hills. Those of them who chose to find their

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livelihood in the colonies would certainly look vigorous and beautiful, inspired, as they would be, by happy work in the fields and workshops of their own creation. Those who had more taste for a large town activity may look perhaps not so hale and radiant, perhaps the world's heavy misery would cling to their very garments. How good for both town and country dweller to meet on a Sunday and interchange impressions and auras, to help each other in the true sense of comradeship !

A colony centred as above, producing goods that *no one else produces*, could afford to have a prominent depot in the large neighbour town, and make a solid name for the industries there represented. It is true that here in England the traditions of work and working centres have nearly disappeared, though not so fully as people imagine. Therefore we may have to make a new start altogether. It is well to build a reputation for an industrial colony on something original and new. In fact, the efforts of some communities to make headway have been unsuccessful just because of this lack of imagination—picking crumbs neglected by some larger machine-work

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centres, and therefore taking a back seat every time.

Suggesting as a centre for an industrial colony an establishment of vegetable dyeing, I have all these things in view, and may state here briefly my reasons :—

1. The vegetable dyeing has now become a necessity, and is demanded by intelligent and artistic people.

2. It will directly appeal and become a necessity to *all* the handicrafts of Great Britain. There is absolutely not a single place I know of where one could give an order for a considerable amount of silk or linen thread dyed with vegetable dyes. So I consider that an establishment of this kind would pay from the first year. I may refer to my own establishment which I kept in Russia for two years, which was paying all the working expenses and could pay better now, as the appreciation is more developed.

3. It will lend beauty to all the minor handicrafts of the colony, making them stand out quite distinctly among other weavings and embroideries, etc., as was seen at the Exhibition of the International Fellowship of

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Workers held at the Summer School. Every time your eye rests on something beautiful you will find that the materials are vegetable dyed.

4. It will cement not only all the colonists by mutual aid, mutual interest, and make the life of the colony lasting, but also connect it with the world at large, because all the world needs good colouring and there is no place to get it.

If built rightly these industrial colonies should be different from commercial agglomerations of people, and express not only the needs of the body, but also the needs of the spirit. They ought to become nuclei of new, righteous life, form oases in the desert of commercialism, grow in number by reason of their beauty and righteousness, and one day unite in an ocean of heavenly life which we will have earned by our own efforts. This is the spiritual cement of the industrial colonies, as vital and as necessary as the economic one for its life and growth—perhaps a thousand times more so.

And I do not mean the same scheme for every colony. Others may require other kinds

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of centres radiating in quite different directions. I am sure some of you may bring in better ideas than mine, and this will help the real true scheme to grow richer. Perhaps my putting before you what I have been doing and dreaming alone, unaided, sometimes half-conscious myself, has been allowed to be voiced only as a signal for better things to come forward.

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